The University of Chicago

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A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
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PROBLEMS OF POETIC DICTION IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CRITICISM

THE opinions in regard to certain problems of poetic diction expressed by sixteen English critics during the period extending from the time of the first writings of the Imagists to the start of World War II are the material of this survey.[1] During this period a large number of problems were recognized. This study excludes those that must be solved through a consideration of meter, rime, and sound effects in general, and concentrates on those involving aspects of words that are peculiar to words. A "vertical" examination having been made of the discussions of these problems in the writings of each critic, a "horizontal" summary may now be offered.

In the discussions studied, the term "poetry" was reserved for that use of language that conveys to the reader not primarily information but an experience, a complex involving emotions or feelings. A number of the critics imposed qualifications upon this experience. T. E. Hulme and Robert Bridges reserved the term "poetry" for intuitions of modes of being that the intellect cannot know.[2] John Middleton Murry, while not limiting the term to an experience involving insight into "a living yet secret reality," "a kind of existence of which our mundane minds and senses have no inkling," nevertheless emphasized this type.[3] Cecil Day Lewis, in turn, stressed the sort of experience that is illuminated by a perception of "those invisible truths which are . . . the basis of reality."[4] Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington held that the experience should be one involving emotions or moods that are precise.[5] According to John Drinkwater the experience must be "most vital and personal."[6] Robert Graves and I. A. Richards emphasized experiences that involve the fusion or conciliation

[1] This paper summarizes a dissertation submitted to the department of English of the University of Chicago. The writer would like to acknowledge the considerable help given by Professors Ronald S. Crane, David Daiches, and George Williamson.

[2] Hulme, "Bergson's Theory of Art," *Speculations* (London, 1924), pp. 146, 149–150, 166. Bridges, *The Necessity of Poetry* (Oxford, 1918), pp. 9–11.

[3] "The Nature of Poetry," *Discoveries* (London, 1924), p. 16; "English Poetry in the Eighteenth Century," *ibid.*, p. 160.

[4] "A Hope for Poetry," *Collected Poems 1929–33 and A Hope for Poetry* (New York, 1935), p. 253.

[5] Pound, "Prolegomena," *The Poetry Review*, 1 (February, 1912), 75–76; "Cavalcanti," *Make It New* (New Haven, 1935), p. 351. Aldington, "Modern Poetry and the Imagists," *The Egoist*, 1 (June 1, 1914), 202. Pound is included in this study because at the time of these writings he was living in England and associating with English writers.

[6] "Poetry and Conduct," *Prose Papers* (London, 1918), p. 9.

of numerous hitherto contradictory emotional ideas or impulses.[7] George Rylands observed that poets recreate the feeling aroused by "any important experience, actual or imaginary."[8] Herbert Read stressed the poet's "heightened state of sensibility."[9] The critics agreed that the experience, the complex of emotions or feelings, can be conveyed only by appealing not primarily to the reader's intellect but to his imagination, or, as some would have it, to his interests.[10]

The question of whether some form of verse is a necessary condition of poetry was considered by several of these critics. Bridges declared that it need not be, but confined his attention to writings in verse.[11] Drinkwater thought that the poetic experience "instinctively selects" verse.[12] Aldington, Lascelles Abercrombie, Murry, and Read declared that it is not essential,[13] although Murry conceded that an experience of "overwhelming immediate personal emotion" tends to find expression in verse.[14] Hulme, Pound, Graves, and Rylands did not discuss the matter, but wrote for the most part as though poetry necessarily involved verse.[15] Day Lewis chose to consider only verse-writers. Richards found "scientific" and "emotive" a better dichotomy than "prose" and "poetry";[16] in much of his writing, however, he fell back upon the latter terms, and when he did so he ordinarily included verse as an aspect of "poetry."[17] William Empson was not particularly concerned with the question, but he limited his examples almost entirely to verse and in his theorizing often assumed its presence.[18] In his early writing T. S. Eliot declared that verse is not es-

[7] Graves, "What Is Bad Poetry?" *The North American Review*, CCXVIII (September, 1923), 353. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London, 1925 [1924]), p. 61.

[8] *Words and Poetry* (New York, 1928), p. 14.

[9] *Phases of English Poetry* (London, 1928), p. 144.

[10] Graves, *op. cit.*, p. 353. Richards, *Science and Poetry* (New York, 1926), p. 30.

[11] *Op. cit.*, pp. 10, 23; "Poetry in Schools," *Society for Pure English Tract No. XVIII* (Oxford, 1924), p. 10.

[12] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

[13] Aldington, "A Note on Poetry in Prose," *The Chapbook*, No. 22 (April, 1921), 16–24, *passim*. Abercrombie, *The Theory of Poetry* (London, 1924), p. 107; *Poetry: Its Music and Meaning* (London, 1932), p. 43. Murry, "Poetry and Criticism," *Aspects of Literature* (New York, 1920), p. 177. Read, *English Prose Style* (London, 1928), p. 42.

[14] *The Problem of Style* (London, 1922), p. 71.

[15] Hulme, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–158, 165; "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," *T. E. Hulme*, ed. Michael Roberts (London, 1938), pp. 258–270, *passim;* "Notes on Language and Style," *ibid.*, p. 273. Pound, "Mr. Hueffer and the Prose Tradition in Verse," *Poetry*, IV (June, 1914), 112; "Vorticism," *The Fortnightly Review*, CII (September, 1914), 462. Graves, *On English Poetry* (New York, 1922), pp. 13–14. Rylands, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[16] C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (London, 1923), pp. 372, 376; Richards, *Science and Poetry*, p. 34.

[17] *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 179.

[18] *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London, 1930), pp. 36–37.

sential to poetry;[19] as to what he later believed, his essays are inconclusive. The views of the critics on this subject, however, had little effect on their discussion of the problems of diction. Bridges maintained that poetry should be permitted usages foreign to ordinary discourse because of the complications imposed by meter.[20] Graves observed that rhythm tends to bring into activity more of a word's meanings, and Richards found rhythm useful in helping determine the meaning of a word;[21] neither of these facts, however, has much bearing upon the choice of diction. Murry declared that Coleridge was mistaken in holding that meter necessitates a different choice of words, whereas Rylands said that Coleridge was right; neither critic, however, offered reasons.[22] In all of these essays the most specific statement regarding a relation between meter and diction was Murry's observation that the fast pace of thought that most meter induces permits the use of bolder metaphors than the slower movement of non-verse.[23]

These critics held generally that using words in their denotative sense is an inadequate technique for poetry. For words to appeal to emotions and feelings some emotional value in the referents must be used. Words whose referents have emotional values connote as many of these values as the whole context, and in particular the juxtaposed words, permit to be brought into play. In "scientific prose," which is addressed to the reason, connoted meanings, as some of the critics pointed out, must be blocked off, for emotional values would interfere with the reasoning process. In poetry, on the other hand, since it is addressed primarily to the imagination and the emotions, those aspects of words must be called into play which appeal to these faculties. Some critics called attention to the fact that words have multiple denotations as well as multiple connotations—that words are concepts made up from many particular actions or moods. Abercrombie considered this problem in somewhat greater detail than the other critics. According to his views the totality of a word's slightly differing denotative meanings constitutes not "richness" but "the artificial existence of an average *meaning*"; the device of juxtaposition delimits a "sector" of meanings and so enriches the word with "the individual vigour of some particular quality."[24] Presumably the similar

[19] "Prose and Verse," *The Chapbook*, No. 22 (April, 1921), pp. 3–4. Eliot had taken up his residence in England by this time.

[20] *The Necessity of Poetry*, p. 35.

[21] Graves, *Another Future of Poetry* (London, 1926), p. 25. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 179.

[22] Murry, "Coleridge's Criticism," *Aspects of Literature*, p. 186. Rylands, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

[23] *The Problem of Style*, pp. 123–125; "Metaphor," *Countries of the Mind*, 2nd series (London, 1931), p. 6.

[24] *The Theory of Poetry*, pp. 127, 130.

emotional values of these meanings combine to indicate this quality; he did not explain why the quality is better presented by the values of a "sector" delimited from the totality than it would be by the values of a single denotation so delimited. Abercrombie's objection to an "average meaning" was matched by Eliot's objection to vague words; Eliot believed that without "a bright clear centre" there can be no suggestion.[25] Bridges held that all of the particulars from which the concept was constructed should be brought into play; he did not, however, explain this view.[26] Read and Empson also declared that all of a word's meanings and values are present when it is used poetically.[27] In these writings there was no clear discussion of the difference between connoted emotional values and multiple denoted meanings, nor was it clearly indicated how the former are brought into play as distinguished from the way in which the latter are evoked. While in almost all the essays it was assumed that the impact of multiple meanings—if only a "sector"—upon the reader is more effective than that of a single meaning, Bridges in one passage found that "correctness" in words is an alternative virtue to suggestiveness, although inferior to it.[28] He did not reconcile his acceptance of "correctness" with his condemnation of "flatness";[29] probably by "correct" words he meant those of the non-suggestive words that are precise; this precision might cause surprise, an effect that he valued; perhaps, also, he did not mean to imply that "correct" words suffice without other aids to produce poetry. Eliot, in turn, found "completeness of statement" a substitute for suggestion, although he did not offer any explanation of its poetic value.[30] For a word to be so used that a great multiplicity of emotional associations are present was regarded by Day Lewis and Edwin Muir as ineffective technique; such wide evocation, according to them, interferes with the presentation of any particular feeling.[31] Day Lewis found the strictly denotative use of words unsatisfactory, however;[32] apparently, then, like Abercrombie, he desired a "sector" of the associations to be delimited if the poet does not avoid literalness by some other technique.

During the period there were a number of discussions, though brief

[25] "Andrew Marvell," *Selected Essays, 1917–1932* (London, 1932), p. 286.

[26] *The Necessity of Poetry*, pp. 21, 32.

[27] Read, "Is It Prose or Poetry?" *The Saturday Review of Literature*, IV (April 14, 1928), 753; Empson, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

[28] *The Necessity of Poetry*, p. 32.

[29] Introduction, *Poems of John Keats*, ed. G. Thorn Drury (London, 1896), p. lxvii.

[30] "John Dryden," *Selected Essays*, pp. 301–302.

[31] Day Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 244–245; Muir, "The Present Language of Poetry," *The London Mercury*, XXXI (November, 1934), p. 35.

[32] *Op. cit.*, p. 245.

ones, as to whether the ends of poetry are furthered by the employment of customary syntax. Pound condemned inversion and periphrastic conjugation and insisted upon the arrangement of words characteristic of good conversation; he held that in our age these special arrangements are meaningless forms and that consequently they separate the language from the experience, which it should accurately express; by proscribing them he believed that he was liberating language from a cumbersome tradition.[33] Bridges, however, in 1918, gave as his opinion that to bar the poet from the use of inversion is again to hamper him; he pointed out that customary word order is not always the order of ideas, and that by being forced to follow it the language may be prevented from adequately expressing the findings of the imagination. He admitted various departures from the order of the ideas—in particular, arrangements for producing surprise; this concession was made in the interest of more effective appeal to the reader's emotions.[34] In the same year he condoned the omission of such unnecessary grammatical elements as the relative pronoun in an attempt at greater concentration; he considered concentration responsible for much of the delight that poetry affords. But in ambiguous grammar, even when intended, Bridges found only "confusion"; such usage destroys "the force of the sentence."[35] Drinkwater desired that the words be arranged in "the best order"; although he did not indicate explicitly what that order is, it would seem, from the rest of his views, to be "the idiom of common use."[36] Abercrombie declared in 1924 that the best syntax for poetry is "the syntax of language spoken," for it has taken on significance from daily use and so serves as a better medium.[37] In 1914 and again in 1924 he dealt with another aspect of the problem of syntax; he attacked the views of the Futurists, a coterie who would largely eliminate syntax. Admitting that in short passages the combined words and rhythm might suffice to express the poet's matter, he believed that ordinarily the language does not accurately present the experience unless the grammar indicates clearly the particular meanings desired from among

[33] "Prolegomena," *op. cit.*, p. 75; "The Later Yeats," *Poetry*, IV (May, 1914), 66; Preface to *Poetical Works of Lionel Johnson* (London, 1915), p. vi; "Elizabethan Classicists: III," *The Egoist*, IV (November, 1917), 154.

[34] Introduction, *Poems of John Keats*, pp. xliii–iv; *The Necessity of Poetry*, p. 35; "Poetic Diction in English," *The Forum*, LXIX (May, 1923), 1536, 1542.

[35] Preface to Notes, *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 2nd ed. (London, 1930), pp. 97–98; Introduction, *Poems of John Keats*, p. xci.

[36] *The Lyric* (London, 1915), p. 7; "The Poet and Tradition," *The Muse in Council* (Boston, 1925), pp. 32–33.

[37] *The Theory of Poetry*, p. 146; *Poetry and Contemporary Speech. The English Association Pamphlet No. 27* (London, 1914), p. 7.

the multiple associations present in the juxtaposed words.[38] Graves, writing in 1926 of the "new poetic Relativity," declared that in the poetry of this school if the mood to be conveyed were one for which grammar is too formal, grammar would be dispensed with.[39] Read said little about syntax: in an essay written in 1928 and reprinted twice during the next decade he quoted a passage of Leone Vivante's defending inversion as a device that on occasion allows a closer relation between the language and the experience; in 1931, however, he attacked it as a meaningless usage that prevents the experience from being accurately expressed.[40] Empson, in 1930, upheld a view similar to those which Abercrombie had objected to in 1914 and 1924: he declared that there is a value in uncertain grammar, that by this device more meaning may be concentrated in a group of words; for the reader is forced to try out various interpretations, with the result that even when he has reached what seems to be the best one, the others remain in his mind. By this concentration language can present the complex experience or idea as a whole and not as a series of parts.[41] Eliot, writing in the early 1930's, commended "a natural, conversational style of speech"; he believed that such a style allows language to express accurately a greater amount of material than an artificial style does.[42] Nevertheless, he had in various writings pointed out the fact that no one style is appropriate to all material.[43] In 1936 he admitted the value of unaccustomed syntax if it is used to bring the language closer to the sense; if it is used only for the effect of "verbal music," however, he condemned it.[44] In 1934 Day Lewis noted, as Bridges had done in 1918, the fact that the omission of unimportant connectives brings about a concentration that may be effective; he observed further that inversion, transposition of the adjective, ellipsis, and a shifting of the parts of speech may produce "an exciting and consistent kind of language."[45] The value of these usages lies in their closer relation to the multiplicity and confusion of present-day thought and in the fact that their novelty effects the communication that overused styles can no longer achieve. Richards, in 1935, spoke further of the fact that Empson had pointed out—that "an absence

[38] *Poetry and Contemporary Speech*, p. 6; *The Theory of Poetry*, pp. 93–99, 147.

[39] *Another Future of Poetry*, pp. 30–32.

[40] "Is It Prose or Poetry?" *op. cit.*, p. 753; "The Modern Long Poem," *The Yale Review*, XXI (December, 1931), 373.

[41] *Op. cit.*, pp. 302–304.

[42] "Dryden the Poet," *John Dryden* (New York, 1932), p. 10; "John Dryden," *op. cit.*, p. 297.

[43] " 'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama," *Selected Essays*, p. 38.

[44] "A Note on the Verse of John Milton," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, XXI (1935) (Oxford, 1936), 35.

[45] *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

of syntax is a favourable condition for Imagination"; an effect of greatly concentrated meaning is achieved, he believed, when the reader must try out various relationships between the words. In his scheme this concentration is valuable because it brings together many impulses to be reconciled.[46] In regard to syntax, then, during this period, apologists were found for the customary order of words, for certain special arrangements of words, and for the elimination to some extent or the obscuring of grammatical connectives. Their proponents believed that each of the three styles allows language to express the experience more accurately.

Numerous discussions appeared on the subject of whether the ends of poetry may be met by the use of the words of ordinary speech, of words set apart especially for poetry, of archaic words, adjectives, abstractions, and words evoking concrete imagery. The question of the adequacy of words of common speech was considered by most of the critics. Pound held that the words of poetry should be drawn from ordinary speech, but that they should be carefully selected; he found colloquial language so lacking in precision that in its actual state it could not well represent the experience.[47] Writing at the same time, and again a decade later, Abercrombie agreed that poetry should use words selected from contemporary speech; he believed that from constant use such words accumulate a great store of meanings, so that they constitute a good medium for the process of suggestion; especially rich through use are words of Saxon and Norman provenience. Of the words of contemporary speech he would except, however, scientific coinages, which have accumulated few associations because of their newness, their limited employment, and their unfamiliar etymology. On the basis of his theory of richness through use Abercrombie opposed a special poetic vocabulary; nevertheless, he did not debar archaic and dialect words if the poet could sufficiently familiarize himself with and exploit the richness which for most people such words do not have.[48] Drinkwater, in essays in 1918 and 1923, insisted in his turn that the words of poetry be taken from the common speech of the poet's time; furthermore, the idiom must be "naturally within the poet's range, part of his own expressive habit." He believed that no other idiom could well present the personal experience for which he reserved the term "poetry." He emphasized, however, that the words must be selected, for otherwise they will not be adequate to express the "intensity" of the poet's vision; many common words are insufficiently precise. Unlike Abercrombie he

[46] *Coleridge on Imagination* (New York, 1935), pp. 91–92; *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York, 1936), p. 125; *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 61.

[47] Preface to *Poetical Works of Lionel Johnson*, p. vi; "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," *The New Age*, x (February 11, 1915), 410.

[48] *Poetry and Contemporary Speech*, pp. 6–10; *The Theory of Poetry*, pp. 136–140, 145.

considered the successful use of archaic words virtually impossible.[49] In an essay in 1923 Bridges defended the use of archaisms and "literary forms"; he considered these necessary if the poet is not to be hampered in presenting the findings of the imagination. For this presentation the poet needs a wide variety of "properties," and ordinary speech would appear incongruous with some of these. Furthermore, Bridges held that for the purposes of poetry rarities of speech are more effective than common expressions since these last may have lost all power of suggestion through overuse; he admitted coinages, also.[50] In 1922 Graves announced his agreement with Abercrombie regarding the richness accumulated in words through daily use; he believed, further, that simple words are most appropriate to the childlike frame of mind involved in what he considered the poetic experience, though "an occasional long strange one for wonder" is also appropriate. In 1926, however, he was willing to admit any class of words—"literary, exotic, archaic, commercial, homely, learned, or disgusting"—according to the mood to be presented; to express the complexities of present-day thought and feeling poetry needs all these.[51] Richards, writing two years earlier, justified the use of allusion to unfamiliar fields of knowledge because of the importance of such referents in the complex life of the modern poet.[52] Rylands observed that simple words from everyday life can produce at climactic moments effects of great intensity because of the impression they give of sincerity; but he pointed out that they must be preceded by more elaborate passages, which build up an emotional foundation.[53] Read, in 1930, presented the same opinion as Bridges and Graves: he declared that the poet does not limit his choice of words in any way; he may even borrow or invent words; to fulfill its function of expressing a highly creative state of mind, poetry will find all these words necessary.[54] Eliot in 1919 had observed that no one style is universally appropriate; in the early 1930's, while holding to this view, he emphasized the advantages of a language close to that of contemporary conversation. As such a language is not, like a conventional poetic vocabulary, committed to any one set of referents, it expresses accurately a wider range of experiences; and, specifically, it allows a more accurate expression of contemporary experience than an out-

[49] "The Poet and Tradition," *op. cit.*, pp. 32–33; *Victorian Poetry* (London, 1923) pp. 24, 65.

[50] "Poetic Diction in English," *op. cit.*, pp. 1536, 1540–42; "Wordsworth and Kipling," *Collected Essays, Papers, Etc., of Robert Bridges*, vol. VII (London, 1933), p. 30; Introduction to *Poems of John Keats*, p. lxxxiii.

[51] *On English Poetry*, pp. 41–42, 68; *Another Future of Poetry*, pp. 31–32.

[52] *Principles of Literary Criticism*, pp. 218–219.

[53] *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

[54] *Wordsworth* (New York, 1931), p. 253; *English Prose Style*, p. x.

moded vocabulary would.[55] Frank Leavis, like Drinkwater, believed that the personal experiences with which he considered poetry as dealing are closely related to the language that the poet "actually speaks"; he would not, however, limit poetry to the conversational—such language would be inadequate for expressing vivid experience.[56] Day Lewis, in 1934, declared that the specialized poetic vocabulary of the "romantics" has been so overused for suggestion that it is spoiled; in view of such inevitable decay he believed that the establishing of conventional vocabularies should be avoided. His contemporaries, he observed, in an attempt to give the old poetic words new meaning adequate for the expression of the emotional complexity of the time, were mixing among these specialized words prosaic words and slang and were using figurative words in their literal sense.[57] Muir also, in the same year, remarked upon the decline of the old vocabulary; he differed with Day Lewis, however, in that he believed that a body of poetic diction is always needed, and that when an old one is exhausted a new one must be built up; presumably he was of the opinion that a generally understood scheme of reference must exist if poetry is, as he hoped, to deal with the general emotional problems of the time. Toward this end he advocated the establishing for poetic purposes of "a language that ideally at least could be spoken by everybody."[58] There seems to have been general agreement that most of the words of common speech are suitable material for poetry but that their values must be evoked by various devices. Few of the critics considered rarity in words a value. Some admitted words of any sort on the grounds that the poet's imagination is capable of dealing with them and that without such resources it would be hampered.

Another debated aspect of vocabulary was the essentiality of words that give concrete images. Hulme, Pound, Aldington, Drinkwater, Eliot, Murry, Rylands, and Read frequently or on occasion indicated a belief that such images make a greater appeal to the imagination than abstractions do.[59] Hulme, Pound, Murry, and Read frrequently used the term

[55] " 'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama," *op. cit.*, p. 38; "Dryden the Poet," *op. cit.*, p. 14; "John Dryden," *op. cit.*, p. 297; Introduction to *London: A Poem, and The Vanity of Human Wishes, English Critical Essays: Twentieth Century*, "The World's Classics," (London, 1933), pp. 302–306.

[56] *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London, 1932), pp. 14, 82, 168; "In Defence of Milton," *Scrutiny*, VII (June, 1938), 112.

[57] *Op. cit.*, pp. 231, 244–248.

[58] "The Present Language of Poetry," *op. cit.*, pp. 35–39.

[59] Hulme, "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," *op. cit.*, pp. 268–270; "Bergson's Theory of Art," *op. cit.*, p. 165; "Romanticism and Classicism," *op. cit.*, p. 134; "Notes on Language and Style," *op. cit.*, p. 274. Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," *Poetry*, I (March, 1913), 201–202; "Vorticism," *op. cit.*, pp. 461–462, 465; "Extract from a Letter," *Poetry*, VII (March, 1916), 322. Aldington, "Free Verse in England," *The Egoist*, I (September 15,

"visual" for these images. It would seem that Hulme ordinarily, and Pound in many cases, meant "visual" in the literal sense; they were both combating over-reliance on sound effects. The others apparently meant merely to intensify the word "concrete" and chose the term "visual" because most persons apprehend objects primarily by means of the eye. None of these critics offered any theory as to why concrete images make a strong appeal to the imagination. Abstractions were defended by Rylands and Richards. Rylands, in 1931, declared his belief that abstractions can be effectively used in conjunction with concrete words: the concrete words create the greater part of the emotional effect and the abstractions explicitly add universality;[60] Pound, in 1913, had banned this combination on the ground that the abstraction "dulls" the concrete image.[61] In 1924 and in his later criticism Richards denied that there is much if any value in mental pictures and the like; he believed that abstract words may be just as effective in arousing emotions; words, he declared in 1936, contain meaning of a sort different from that found in images: "Words are the meeting points at which regions of experience which can never combine in sensation or intuition, come together."[62]

The problem of triteness was considered by several of the critics; one kind of triteness that they discussed was singleness of reference resulting from wrong use over a long period or from mere overuse. Abercrombie believed that removing words from common life and reserving them as a special vocabulary for poetry is an abuse; through being employed always to evoke a particular emotion, these words lose what multiplicity of association they may have had.[63] Rylands did not discuss segregation, but he observed that most adjectives, as a result of long use in poetry, have become "conventionalized" and can be successfully used for poetic purposes only when some of their suppressed associations are recalled by a specially constructed context. Furthermore, too frequently they recall some famous context, which, it would seem, exerts undue influence upon

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1914), 351; "The Poetry of F. S. Flint," *ibid.*, II (May 1, 1915), 80. Drinkwater, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 93. Eliot, *Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry* (New York, 1917), p. 14; "Andrew Marvell," *op. cit.*, p. 286; "Dante," *Selected Essays*, pp. 225–230, 254. Murry, *The Problem of Style*, pp. 87, 98–99; *Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 120; compare, however, "Metaphor," *op. cit.*, pp. 7–8. Rylands, *op. cit.*, pp. 56–57. Read, "The Modern Long Poem," *op. cit.*, p. 371; "Myth, Dream, and Poem," *Collected Essays* (London, 1938), pp. 103–104; compare, however, *Phases of English Poetry*, p. 56, and "In Defence of Shelley," *In Defence of Shelley and Other Essays* (London, 1936), pp. 83–84.

[60] "English Poets and the Abstract Word," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, XVI (1930) (Oxford, 1931), 56–57.

[61] "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," *op. cit.*, p. 201.

[62] *Principles of Literary Criticism*, pp. 119–120; *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 129–131

[63] *Poetry and Contemporary Speech*, p. 9; *The Theory of Poetry*, pp. 139–140.

their meaning.[64] Bridges advocated the use of rare words, such as dialectal words, because they are "free from the stain of conventionality."[65] Another kind of triteness was found in the words of common speech; it is the lack of any precise meaning, and it results from long careless use. The "average meaning" that Abercrombie deprecated results from the use of a word for many slightly differing meanings; Abercrombie seems not, however, to have considered each instance of use as careless.[66] Drinkwater, who, like Abercrombie, advocated the employment of common words in poetry, but who differed from Abercrombie in offering chiefly negative reasons for their use, decried "the looseness of common talk"; for him Abercrombie's "average meaning" seems to have been an uncertain meaning resulting from long-continued careless application of the word.[67]

A condition similar in some ways to these forms of triteness was pointed out by Day Lewis and Muir as afflicting the specialized poetic vocabulary of the "romantics." These words, in their opinion, are "exhausted" as a result of having "been compelled to represent a multiplicity of poetic associations."[68] This view would controvert the opinion that by being reserved for poetry words lose their suggestivity. This diffuseness of association makes the words useless, they declared, for presenting any particular feeling.

Beyond formulated language poets may have recourse to figures of speech. A number of these critics discussed the function of metaphor and considered several metaphorical uses of language. Pound, Murray, and Richards protested against the view that metaphor is an ornament; metaphor is rather, they declared, a new word, a structural part of the poem, and Pound and Murray banned ornamental metaphor as an encumbrance.[69] Read, on the other hand, admitted it, but he did not develop his opinion regarding it.[70] In the various metaphorical uses of language a word represents at least two matters; Richards pointed out that actually nearly all language might be considered metaphorical, since "a word is normally a substitute for (or means) not one discrete

[64] *Words and Poetry*, pp. 112–115.

[65] "Poetic Diction in English," *op. cit.*, p. 1542.

[66] *The Theory of Poetry*, pp. 127–130.

[67] *Victorian Poetry*, p. 91.

[68] Day Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 168, 247. Muir, "The Present Language of Poetry," *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[69] Pound, "Vorticism," *op. cit.*, p. 466; "Affirmations. IV," *The New Age*, XVI (January 28, 1915), 349; "Imagisme," *ibid.* (February 11, 1915), 415; "Cavalcanti," *op. cit.*, pp. 351, 361. Murry, *The Problem of Style*, pp. 12–13; "Metaphor," *op. cit.*, p. 2. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 90, 94, 100, 120.

[70] *English Prose Style*, p. 28.

past impression but a combination of general aspects."[71] These critics, however, reserved the term for a combination of matters that are in many of their aspects rather widely separated. Different critics saw metaphor as performing different functions. Hulme, although he did not analyze its effect, insisted that metaphor is necessary if intuitions of "reality" are to be communicated; of all the critics he alone declared that metaphor is essential to poetry.[72] Pound emphasized metaphor as a means of communicating those findings of the exploring mind for which no words exist.[73] Aldington summarily banned "dead" and mixed metaphors.[74] Abercrombie did not deal with metaphor at any length; he defended mixed metaphors, however, as contributing to what he considered a valuable act of the imagination, the apprehension of the many cross-relationships in the poetic world under consideration.[75] Drinkwater, likewise, in one of his essays, indicated that he valued metaphor as an imaginative act that enlarges the poet's vision; in another essay he pointed it out as a device for communication.[76] Murray discussed it as a communication device, and also as an exploratory act; in terms of this latter he admitted mixed metaphors. Although Murray gave a number of pages to metaphor, his discussions were appreciative rather than systematically analytical.[77] Read emphasized the value of metaphor in expressing a complex idea by "illumination" rather than by analysis or abstract statement; he apparently believed that such expression is more vivid and consequently more adequate. In 1938 he distinguished between metaphor, a finding of the conscious mind, and "image," a symbol "given by the unconscious"; these latter he seemed to consider of greater value.[78] Day Lewis discussed metaphor only briefly; he found this type of expression more closely related to the poet's experience than is the sort of imagery that involves explanatory matter; in addition he pointed out a new relationship between the members of the expression: "two images of equal value wrestling as it were with one another and bringing out the strength of each."[79] Richards studied metaphor in more detail than the other critics had done; he was interested in it as a particularly

[71] *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 93.

[72] "Notes on Language and Style," *op. cit.*, pp. 277, 285; "Romanticism and Classicism," *op. cit.*, p. 135.

[73] "Vorticism," *op. cit.*, p. 466; "Imagisme," *op. cit.*, p. 415.

[74] "The Art of Poetry," *The Fortnightly Review*, CXIX (January, 1923), 117.

[75] *The Theory of Poetry*, p. 209.

[76] *Swinburne: An Estimate* (London, 1913), pp. 24–25; *The Way of Poetry* (Boston, 1922), p. xxii.

[77] *The Problem of Style*, pp. 12–13, 83, 123–125; "Metaphor," *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[78] *English Prose Style*, pp. 25–28; "Myth, Dream, and Poem," *op. cit.*, pp. 104–108.

[79] *Op. cit.*, p. 244.

effective device for organizing complex attitudes: "through the wider field of possible linkages which it opens as compared to explicit literal statement, [it] may allow a freer and more delicate intervention of more remotely relevant factors."[80] He indicated various interrelations between the juxtaposed ideas from which this "meaning" arises and insisted that disparities may be as important as resemblances. Richards declared also that few so-called "dead" metaphors are really dead; here he differed with Hulme and Murray, who had given this type of metaphor some thought. The basis of his view was his convicition that a great multiplicity of meaning is present in words and that many circumstances have the power of calling these associations forth.[81]

With the exception of Richards' treatises, in those of their discussions in which the critics considered metaphor as a communication device, they looked upon one member of the device as a translation of the other. They believed that by being translated into the figurative member—for which they usually reserved the term "metaphor"—the literal member is more effectively presented to the imagination than it would be by being described. Those critics who emphasized the value of metaphor as an imaginative or "exploratory" act viewed it as a part of the poet's original insight—a discovery of relationships not ordinarily perceived. Murray, in particular, developed this view; part of his defense of mixed metaphors rested upon this sudden insight into hidden relationships.[82] Richards pointed out that in many metaphors—he preferred to apply the term to both members together—the members are not related primarily as principal and translation but interact to form a third meaning. He observed that many ratios of relative importance are possible between the two members. In metaphors whose members interact, the total meaning resulting from the interaction communicates the poet's experience.[83]

Pound's "image" served as a meeting place for several meanings. In most of the passages in his criticism in which he discussed the image he considered it as a vehicle for the conveyance of the experience. In some passages, however, he treated it as a device for bringing new experience into being, a symbol without an "intended meaning," a device "to give people new eyes, not to make them see some new particular thing"; and

[80] *Coleridge on Imagination* (New York, 1935), pp. 33, 91; *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 93–133, *passim; Interpretation in Teaching* (New York, 1938), pp. 120–122, 129, 137, 141–142. Cf. Hulme, "Romanticism and Classicism," *op. cit.*, p. 134; "Bergson's Theory of Art," *op. cit.*, p. 152; and Murry, "Metaphor," *op. cit.*, p. 2, and *The Problem of Style*, p. 14.

[81] *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 101–102.

[82] "Metaphor," *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 6–8.

[83] *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 100. Cf. Day Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

he classed imagism with expressionism and neo-cubism as methods that are primarily creative.[84] So understood, Pound's "image" would have essentially the nature of the "image" of Reverdy's, to which Read called attention.[85]

Hulme observed that clear logical meaning could not be demanded of a poem, since meeting the demands of logic would destroy the poem's value.[86] Read went further and, like Mallarmé, declared that obscurity may be a positive value in poetry; this obscurity is apparently the intuition of something that one does not comprehend. Read pointed out that obscurity differs from ambiguity, which is grammatical.[87] Empson dealt with ambiguity; he considered it valuable chiefly because it allows a complexity to be conveyed as a whole. It differs, however, from metaphor, which may serve the same end, in that a process of analysis precedes the apprehension of the complexity as a whole: in seeking the meaning of the ambiguity the reader perceives many possible meanings; these part-meanings remain in his mind, finally combining to represent the whole complexity.[88]

Very few differences are observable between the discussions of the early and later parts of the period. For the most part, the same problems appeared year after year, and the same comments were made. Some matters, however, received less attention. Before Graves and Richards, in the early 1920's, none of these critics had considered the poetic experience as a harmonizing of hitherto inharmonious interests or had discussed communication as the arousing and ordering of impulses. Graves did not explain the grounds of his position, but Richards rested his upon the belief that the aesthetic experience is not an experience *sui generis*.[89] No other critic presented this opinion. Although Bridges had admitted that there may be value in the omission of some connective words, none of the others offered any defense of elliptical or fragmentary syntax until Graves wrote of it in 1926; Day Lewis also commended it, in 1934. Early in the period Hulme, Pound, and Aldington insisted upon the essentiality of visual concrete words. This view was later presented in some of the writings of Eliot, Rylands, and Read; but on the whole, less was said about this matter after the war. Rylands and Richards were the first, in

[84] "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," *op. cit.*, pp. 200–203; "Vortex. Pound," *Blast*, No. 1 (June, 1914), p. 154; "Vorticism," *op. cit.*, pp. 463–466, 469; "Affirmations. IV," *op. cit.*, p. 349.

[85] "Obscurity in Poetry," *In Defence of Shelley*, pp. 160–161.

[86] "Notes on Language and Style," *op. cit.*, p. 282.

[87] "Obscurity in Poetry," *The Bookman* (London), LXXXV (October, 1933), 14–15; *ibid.*, *In Defence of Shelley*, pp. 150–151, 157.

[88] *Op. cit.*, pp. 36–37, 302, 304, 319.

[89] *Principles of Literary Criticism*, ch. II, *passim.*

the 1930's, to make a case for abstractions. In the middle 1920's Richards and Graves, who both considered as an important function of poetry the reconciling of inharmonious interests, pointed out the value of bringing into the poem, by allusions or words of specialized vocabularies, any uncommon interests that are important to the poet. In 1934 Day Lewis also admitted references to all the interests of complex modern life.[90] Day Lewis first discussed the renovation of the language by the mixing of poetical and commonplace images. Bridges' interest in reviving dialectal words was not taken up by later critics. The question of archaic words reappeared, however, in another form when Day Lewis pointed out how some post-war poets were returning to the old denotative sense of certain words because the later connotative sense has become exhausted. Study of metaphorical processes was carried farther in the 1930's than it had been before. Day Lewis, Richards, and Read analyzed relationships between the members of the metaphor that the earlier critics had not discussed, although in 1922 Murray had given attention to metaphor as a mode of apprehension. Read's consideration of dream imagery, in 1938, was the first among these critics. And except for Bridges, in a brief passage, none of the critics anticipated Empson's work on ambiguity in 1930.

In these discussions a great deal was said of "intensity"—sometimes intensity of the experience conveyed, and sometimes concentration of meaning in the words that make up the poem. In 1915 Pound found the art of his decade noteworthy chiefly for its search for "a lost intensity";[91] this intensity involved the accurate apprehension of experiences and the concentrated expression of them in language. The "image" that he described in 1913 and in later writings was intense in this latter sense and was the occasion for an intense experience on the part of the reader. In 1914 Abercrombie spoke of the "intenser life" of language in poetry as compared with conversation;[92] more meaning is active in the words. Drinkwater pointed out the intensity of the experiences that poetry presents, the "maximum of imaginative pressure" involved in composition, and the "concentrated and quickened and enriched form of daily speech" that is used in the presentation.[93] Bridges, who in 1896 had written of the aesthetic pleasure that results from concentration in poetic expression, in 1918 excused some of Hopkins' peculiarities because they were means

[90] Ford Madox Hueffer—later Ford—a critic not considered in this paper, had, in 1913, admitted "slang where slang is felicitous." ("Impressionism—Some Speculations. II," *Poetry*, II [September, 1913], 224.)

[91] "Affirmations. VI," *The New Age*, XVI (February 11, 1915), 411.

[92] *Poetry and Contemporary Speech*, p. 8.

[93] "Poetry and Conduct," *op. cit.*, p. 9; *The Lyric*, p. 29; "The Poet and Tradition," *op. cit.*, p. 32.

toward this effect.[94] In 1924 Muir, discussing writing in general, desiderated exactitude because it makes "thoughts dynamic" and evokes "intensity" of emotion.[95] Richards, in 1924, found complexity important for two reasons: by involving many determinants it can convey a meaning more exactly, and by appealing to many impulses it can bring about in the reader's mind more order among what is confused.[96] In 1926 Graves observed that in poetry words are characterized by "increased vitality"; they contain more meaning than in ordinary use.[97] Read in 1928 pointed out the "heightened state of sensibility" of the poet; in this year and later he indicated the intensity of the effect of metaphor and "image" upon the reader.[98] Rylands commended the great "intensity" effected by the use of simple language at climactic moments; this is a concentration of the meaning evoked by the more elaborate preceding passages.[99] Empson, in 1930, defined poetry in terms of multiple meaning, and his *Seven Types of Ambiguity* and *Some Versions of Pastoral* are studies of circumstances under which concentration of meaning is present.[100] In 1934 Day Lewis pointed out a trend toward "intensification" of imagery in the works of poets of his time; these poets presented their imagery without the addition of explanatory matter.[101] It would seem that many of the critics of this period considered "intensity" the key characteristic of twentieth-century poetry, and, in fact, of all the best poetry—an "intense" experience so presented that the reader shares this excitement.

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[94] Introduction, *Poems of John Keats*, pp. xci–xcii; Preface to Notes, *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 97.

[95] "Reflections and Conjectures," *Latitudes* (New York, 1924), pp. 295–296.

[96] *Principles of Literary Criticism*, pp. 109–110, 179.

[97] *Another Future of Poetry*, p. 25.

[98] *Phases of English Poetry*, p. 144; *English Prose Style*, pp. 25–28; "Obscurity in Poetry," *In Defence of Shelley*, p. 160; "Myth, Dream, and Poem," *op. cit.*, p. 104.

[99] *Words and Poetry*, p. 23.

[100] *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 319; *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London, 1935).

[101] *Op. cit.*, p. 244.